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# News Release

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**January 31, 2013**

### **VA BHHCS Invites Community to ‘Salute Hospitalized Veterans’**

VA Black Hills Health Care System (BHHCS) invites the public to participate in open-house activities February 10-16, during the observance of National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans.

"The National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans gives everyone a chance to let those who have given our nation so much know that they are not forgotten," said VA BHHCS Voluntary Service Coordinator Cheryl Rieniets. "We've scheduled activities to bring Veterans and visitors together throughout the week. We welcome people of all ages to bring Valentine cheer to our Veterans. Contact Voluntary Services if you are interested in visiting."

The annual VA National Salute program began in 1978 and is traditionally held the week of Valentine's Day, kicking off with VA's popular *Valentines for Vets* program. Individuals, Veterans' groups, military personnel, civic organizations, businesses, schools, local media, celebrities and sports stars traditionally deliver valentines or visit the more than 98,000 Veterans of the U.S. armed services who are cared for every day in VA medical facilities, outpatient clinics, domiciliaries, and community living centers.

Local Salute Week highlights include the annual Four Chaplains Day memorial service at Saint Francis of Assisi Church in Sturgis on February 10; a social and Bingo for Veterans on the community living centers; a poker night for Veterans in the domiciliary in Hot Springs on February 11; distribution of Valentines and gifts to Veterans in the community living centers; a trip to the RUSH Hockey game on February 12; a visit from congressional aides, who will be available to visit with any Veterans in Fort Meade on February 13 and Hot Springs on February 14; a carnival for Veterans in Hot Springs on February 16; and a pizza party, game night and special dinners throughout the week.

"VA volunteers are an integral part of our health care team and the National Salute program is a great way for people to learn more about helping the Veterans we serve," Rieniets said.

While the National Salute kicks off in mid-February, Americans have the chance to show their appreciation to Veterans all year by volunteering their time or donating to VA medical facilities throughout the year. No medical experience is necessary and volunteers are encouraged to share ideas on how they would like to 'give back' using their unique skills. To find opportunities or for more

information on the week's events, call the Fort Meade VA Medical Center Voluntary Services at 605-347-7206 or the Hot Springs VA Medical Center Voluntary Services at 605-745-2865. Take every day to thank a Veteran!

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